

Beat: Miscellaneous

France's Hollande to receive UN peace prize for Mali intervention

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USPA News - French President François Hollande will be awarded the United Nations cultural agency's peace prize for his "valuable contribution" to peace and stability in Africa, in particular for the country's military intervention in Mali, the agency announced on Thursday. Former Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano, who chaired the jury, said Africa caught the attention of the jury due to a number of threats that are affecting the continent.

France has played a significant role in recent efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region, and as such the jury decided to award the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Hollande. "Having assessed the dangers and the repercussions of the situation on Africa, and on Mali in particular, as well as on the rest of the world, the Jury appreciated the solidarity shown by France to the peoples of Africa," Chissano said, adding that the jury condemned the ongoing conflict in Mali. Fighting in northern Mali began in January 2012 as insurgent groups have been campaigning for independence and autonomy in the region. President Amadou Toumani Toure was ousted in a coup d'état in March 2012 for failing to handle the crisis, and by April, much of the region had been completely seized by rebel forces. The French government decided last month to deploy armed forces in Mali in an effort to prevent rebels from advancing south and reaching the country's capital. "The Jury condemns the violation of Mali's territorial integrity, the violation of human rights, the taking of hostages and the destruction of the cultural heritage of humanity in Timbuktu," Chissano said. "The Jury therefore decided to award the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Mr François Hollande, President of the French Republic, for his great contribution to peace and stability in Africa." The award, created in 1989 by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), honors people, institutions and organizations that have contributed significantly to the promotion, research, preservation or maintenance of peace. It is named after the first president of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). The award ceremony for the prize - which consists of \$150,000, a gold medal and a peace diploma - will be held in the near future after agreed upon with the laureate. Previous winners of the prize include former Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva; Nelson Mandela and Frederik W. De Klerk; Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat; King Juan Carlos of Spain; and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

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